

U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

James L. Oberstar Chairman Washington, DC 20515

John L. Mica Ranking Republican Member

David Heymsfeld, Chief of Staff Ward W. McCarragher, Chief Counsel

December 17, 2007

James W. Coon II, Republican Chief of Staff

The Honorable John Lewis
U.S. House of Representatives
343 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Lewis:

Thank you for your letter requesting a hearing before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to investigate the Federal, State, and local governmental response to the historic drought facing the southeastern United States. We agree that hearing on this issue is warranted, and we commit to scheduling a hearing within the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure early in 2008.

This drought has had significant impacts throughout the region, but has been most visible in the two watersheds of the Apalachicola, Chattahoochee, and Flint Rivers ("ACF") and their tributaries, whose waters flow through the States of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, and the Alabama, Coosa, and Tallapoosa Rivers ("ACT") and their tributaries, whose waters flow through the States of Georgia and Alabama. These two river systems involve many Federal, State, and local governmental agencies charged with both short-term and long-term responsibilities for the economic and ecological sustainability of the region, as well as a host of private stakeholders who rely heavily on the water resources of the region.

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has jurisdiction over the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ("Corps"), which is responsible for the management of 5 projects in the ACF system and 5 projects within the ACT system. Each of these projects was authorized with express statutory purposes, such as flood control, navigation, and hydropower. The Corps must operate its projects for the purposes which they have been expressly authorized, and in a manner that complies with all applicable environmental laws. The Corps also operates these projects on a cooperative basis with the States and local governments, each of which has a fiduciary responsibility to protect and sustain these resources for the long-term benefit of the region, and for the protection of the environment.

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The Committee will invite the Governors of the States of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida, to provide an update on their efforts to provide an equitable sharing of the water resources of the region, as well as their plans to ensure a long-term solution to the water needs of the region.

The Committee will also invite the Corps, and other relevant Federal, State, and local agencies and stakeholders to explore how the various agencies and stakeholders have prepared for and responded to the drought, and how available Federal, State, and local resources and expertise can be utilized to develop a locally-prepared, long-term water resource sustainability plan for the region.

With all best regards.

Sincerely,

imes L. Oberstar, M.C.

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Committee on Transportation

and Infrastructure

Eddie Bernice Jo

Chairwoman

Subcommittee on Water Resources

and Environment

cc: Members of the Georgia Congressional Delegation